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ABSTRACT

If writing teachers want to use modality effectively, they first have to deal with three problems: identification of markers of modality in English; representation (the use of models for modality); and correlation (pedagogical usefulness, and writing strategies for students). Two models of modality address the problems which writing teachers should deal with before actually developing strategies to be given to the student. The first task is to construct a two-state model of the "core" markers of modality in English: the first state, the "actual" one uses nonmodal expressions; and the second state, the "alternate" one, is always expressed by core modals like "can" or "must". A two-dimensional matrix puts flesh on the model. Next, another model displays typical kinds of "character" an author or reader gives, or can give, to each state. "Character" can be divided into the personal and the collective. In developing and representing a strategy, writing teachers must also try to be aware of what conditions control its use. With this in mind, writing teachers should consider: (1) expanding information about the subject (essentially a prewriting or revising activity); (2) representing rhetorical intention; and (3) representing stylistic variation. Modality should be used chiefly in the context of peer review and only then as an optional procedure. (Three figures representing the models are included; 21 references are attached.) (RS)

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WRITING, PEDAGOGY, MODALITY

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WRITING, PEDAGOGY, MODALITY

*There is, perhaps, no area of English grammar that is both more important and more difficult than the system of the modals. Palmer Preface.

*In all probability that source [of realis-irrealis] was dreaming. Bickerton 284.

Modality, like negation or questions, is apparently a linguistic universal. One can say that it appears in all languages (in different ways) or even that any language without it would be "impossible" (Hamel and Schaefer; cf. Lyons, 2: 789-849 and Bickerton 26, 58). The universality and importance of modality is perhaps generally apparent to anyone who translates from one language to another or who reflects on the nature and function of forms like "can," "should," or "must." Without them it might be possible to make plans, predict what will happen next or construct what logicians and philosophers call "possible worlds" (Lewis, Forbes, Eco 217-60). But it would not be possible without them, if we assume that thinking cannot occur independently of language, to express (speak or write about) such plans or possible worlds (cf. Schaff 81 ff.). Modality itself presumably cannot be described without reference to forms like "might" "would," or "the possible/impossible" etc--as the last few sentences of this text itself seem to demonstrate. Indeed,

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one can say the modality is a primary source of linguistic reflexivity, the capacity of language to "turn" and describe itself--irrespective of whether or not we correlate it with such "metaphysical" notions as possible worlds, the irrealis or nonexisting objects (cf. Parsons 23).

Modals exist, it seems fair to say, as surface structures in almost every written text of a certain length--of, say, more than a paragraph. But there are problems in identifying reasons for their existence or in representing such existence. Marvell's use of "Had" in To His Coy Mistress (1681) ("Had we but world enough and time" [1]) can be identified as a modal form on grounds that it helps to express a state of affairs (a world) different from the present, actual, one. And, assuming that "had" and "if" have essentially the same modal function, we see the same difference-from-the-actual world in these lines from Pomfret's The Choice (1702):

> If heav'n the grateful Liberty wou'd give
> That I might chuse my Method how to live;
> And all those Hours propitious Fate shou'd lend
> In blissful Ease and Satisfaction spend (1-4).

The difference-from-the-actual in this case would roughly be described as the ideal, or the imaginably perfect, world--much like, one assumes, the "best of all possible worlds" was to Leibniz (cf. Mates 69-72).

What, given all of the above, can writing teachers do with modality? Should they simply describe it to students? List its

many forms? Make it part of peer-review sessions or their final evaluation of the text? Perhaps. But, based on my own experience with it, I now believe that if we want to use modality effectively we first have to deal with three problems, (i) identification of markers of modality in English, (ii) representation and (iii) correlation. With (i) we are essentially asking how modals differ from nonmodals and how modals differ from each other, e.g., how does "can" differ from "may," or "must" from "ought to." If we can answer this, then we will want to identify salient modals, ie., those with the highest possible pedagogical usefulness (cf. Pavel 61-64). With (ii) the question concerns the use of models for modality; one that have both a visual and cognitive side and ones that can be used to correlate the form of a modal with this meaning or to establish correlations with the basic tasks of the writer. With (iii), finally, we are primarily interested in the question of pedagogical usefulness and of giving students writing strategies. Here we would normally include ways to improve current pedagogy or embark on the actual development of new strategies of writing consciously based on modality.

I will later focus on three general strategies, (a) using modality to "expand" information about the subject, (b) representing rhetorical intention (either in the text as a whole or in some part of it) and (c) representing stylistic variation. But the view of modality in all of these is more heuristic than algorithmic; more a place to start asking questions than a set of

rigid procedures for always reaching a known goal. Students' use of modality, in addition, will typically take place in the context of peer review or conferences with the instructor. Peer editors, drawing on their own knowledge of modality, are central in making it known to authors where their texts are deficient in modality; or, conversely, overmodalized.

Before going on to a discussion of writing strategies, I first need to describe ways to model modality.[1] Each of these (figs. 1, 2 and 3) please notice, addresses the problems (mentioned above) which I believe an instructor should deal with before actually developing strategies to be given the student. The models, inasmuch as they take their substance from linguistics, philosophy and literary criticism, are interdisciplinary in origin. One consequence of this, linguists and grammarians might say, is that the models oversimplify what is obviously very complex linguistic material. And I would agree. I do not, e.g., use the common grammatical classifications of modality into the "epistemic," "root" or "deontic" (Palmer 41-69; Coates 20-2; Quirk et al 219, 221-236) or the "intrinsic" and "extrinsic" (Quirk, et al 219-251); and I make use of only a small number of discrete modal forms like "can" and "must." No attempt, in addition, is made to correlate modality with other important aspects of language like questions, negation or imperatives (cf. Davies 125-29).[2] The important relationship of modality to factivity is also ignored (Kiparsky & Kiparsky 367; Coates 235). But such simplification and

reductionism, I would argue, is necessary in order to increase one's chances of making pedagogical intentions intelligible--especially to students often completely ignorant of what the term "modality" means.

THE TWO-STATES SUBJECT

The first task is to construct a model of "core" markers of modality in English and give a picture of their general effect. I suggest we do this by beginning with what can be called the "two-states" representation of the subject. The first state, the "actual" one, is one the writer creates with essentially nonmodal expressions like "X was Y," "X married Y," or "X is Y." Whatever is predicted of X, that is, is done entirely without the use of core modals, like "can" or "must," or "support" ones (ones that help to amplify the sense of the core modals) like "if" and "had." The second state, the "alternate" one, is always expressed by core modals (typically the verbal auxiliaries, "should," "may," etc.) and usually in combination with support modals like "if," or markers of future time. Expressions of an alternate state then include "X may be Y," "X must be Y" or "If X then Y." It is important to note that (i) the writer may, in the same piece of discourse, change the state of the subject, (ii) represent one aspect of the subject in one state and another aspect in the other state or (iii) increase or decrease the intensity (or degree) of a state. For this he or she typically adds to existing expressions forms like "very," "highly," "obviously" and the like. Inasmuch as we are talking about

modeling, and not about truth, falsity or validity, we do not say that either the actual or alternate state is any more the case than the other. Lying about what one knows to be the case may indeed have a higher correlation with the alternate state than it does with the actual one.[3] But his, at the present, is not part of the way we distinguish the two states.4

To put more flesh on all of this we construct the following kind of two-dimensional matrix (fig. 1):

	SUBJECT STATES			
	ACTUAL		ALTERNATE	
	Past	Present	Possible	Necessary
EXPRESSIONS				
1. I may go to New York tomorrow.				
2. I must have more money.				
3. We were in Italy last fall.				
4. If he is a doctor, then he must be rich.				
5. I am sick.				
6. Shouldn't you be in school?				
7. Some mute inglorious Milton here may rest, /Some Cromwell guiltless of his country's blood (Elegy in A Country				

Churchyard 59-60).

Fig. 1

(Where ellipses on the vertical axis mean that expressions of either the actual or alternate state are potentially infinite; alternatively, stand as a signal to the user to add more expressions to the matrix.)

Items on the horizontal axis, with the help of expressions on the vertical axis, are given the following interpretation. The actual state, at any given place in the text, can be either past or present. #3, "We were in Italy last fall," is an example of pastness; #5, "I am sick," is one of presentness. And, obviously, both the past and the present actual state can be expressed in the same utterance: "the death of the king last week is the cause of the queen's current depression." The distinction between the possible and the necessary alternate state is necessary in order to distinguish between expressions #1, "I may go to New York tomorrow," and #2, "I must have more money." (Deciding between the possible or the necessary, I will later say, is also basic to the way a writer chooses to represent the alternate state.) We also assume that whatever is necessary must also be possible, but not always that what is possible is also necessary. A good example of what is both possible and necessary (and a subject of many literary works) is a representation of one's own personal death: e.g., Shakespeare's "No longer mourn for me when I am dead/Than you shall hear the surly sullen bell/Give warning to the world that I am fled/From

this vile world, with vilest worms to dwell" (Sonnet 71). The actual and the alternate state, presumably, thus correlate with personal judgments about one's own mortality and that of others; or, more generally, with human survival. To know if X can kill me, e.g., I must be able to first know if it is actual or not. In this context, obviously, the alternate has the meaning of "unreal" or "nonexistent." What is alternate is also unreal in the sense that it is not now (at this place and time) actual.[5] Negatives like "no," "not," or "nothing," one supposes, play a supporting role in creating in the text the alternate-unreal subject state. Fig. 1 is useful to introduce students to major modal forms like "can" or "must" and to isolate some general distinctions between them and nonmodal forms. But we also need a model of how modals may give informational weight to a subject. For this I suggest a second matrix of subject states (horizontal axis) and information categories (vertical axis, [fig. 2]). These categories, please notice, are essentially Aristotle's system of <u>kategoria</u>; or, more familiarly, possible answers to wh-questions assumed to have been asked in a state of ignorance about the subject.

modality: 9

SUBJECT STATES

INFORMATION CATEGORIES	Actual		Alternate	
	Past	Present	Possible	Necessary
1. Substance/event situation (What)				
2. Person (Who)				
3. Time (When)				
4. Place (Where)				
5. Quantity (How much/ many)				
6. Mode/quality (How)				
7. Cause/motive/reason (Why)				

Fig. 2

As an overview of what we expect fig. 2 to model, or to be a model of, please consider texts like (i) and (ii):

(i) Beauty is but a flower
Which wrinkles will devour;
Brightness falls from the air;
Queens have died young and fair;

Dust hath closed Helen's eye.
I am sick, I must die. (Nashe, Litany in Time of Plague [1597]).

(ii) I wish either my father or my mother, or indeed both of them, as they were in duty both equally bound to it, had minded what they were about when they begot me; had they duly consider'd how much depended upon what they were then doing (Sterne, Tristram Shandy [1760], ch. 1, bk. 1).

In (i) the alternate state, the death of the "I," is represented as a necessary one, a "must." The actual state is represented by, e.g., a statement about his current condition, "I am sick," statements about the death of others, "Queens have died young and fair," and ones about objects he sees around him, "Brightness falls from the air." Memory of past events, plus what he is now experiencing, make up, in short, the actual state; what he can predict from such knowledge constitutes the alternate state. In (ii), by contrast, the alternate state is represented as a possibility, not a necessity as in (i). The alternate state, Tristram's mother and father acting differently from what they actually did, could have happened. If the alternate state had actually been the case, then his present troubles would have been avoided. But, obviously, the alternate is not the actual and

this helps establish the conditions of Tristram's life and opinions. One could go further and say that the alternate state for Sterne is an intelligible ground for comedy whereas for Nashe it is more one for tragedy; or at least a human condition traditionally associated with tragedy. (Later, in a discussion of writing strategies, I will say that each state can go to represent rhetorical intention. The intelligibility of the intention, however, typically depends on more detailed information than that displayed in fig. 2. The question of intelligibility, at least in my classes, is usually settled by peer-editors in consultation with the author.)

But we also must see the information categories #1 through #7 (fig. 2) as informational variables for a writer. Substance, that is, is never represented as an undifferentiated "what" but as a specific thing, event or situation; as a plague, e.g., or avalanche or as "brightness" falling from the air. To elucidate how specific the categories can become we ask students to pose the following kinds of questions to themselves and their peers:

#1: Substance. Is X a thing, an event, an abstraction? Something like a typewriter, a flood, or the nature of truth? Is X represented by its sensory properties, size, shape, color, etc.? Does X have a name, "triange" or "geophagy," more than one name, "hen," "chicken," "fowl," etc., or is it indicated by labels like "it," "this thing," or "that"?

#2: Person. Is X male, female, young, old, married, etc.? What forms of address, proper name, title, etc., are used to identify

the person. In Nashe's lines the "I" is perhaps a more minimal form of address than "queen." "Queen," that is, answers more fully than "I" the question of "who is X"?

#3: Time. Is X now or then? At 10:00 o'clock or three years ago? If X is an event, then how long did it last? If X is a procedure, then how long does each of its states last? In such questions, of course, we are essentially asking about segmented time, a before, a now, and an after for X.

#4: Place. Is X in this place, that one, or elsewhere? Does the place of X have a name, "my house," or more than one name, "Logan," "Utah," "577 N. 3rd W," etc?

#5: Quantity. Is X a unity or a plurality? Is it named by a mass noun, "water" or mud," or by a count one, "keys" or "teeth"? Is X described by ordinal numbers, "first," "second," etc., or by cardinal ones, "one," "two," etc? Or by one in one context and another in another context?

#6: Mode/quality. How is X? Is X "sick"? Is it big, bright or long? Inasmuch as X can be represented as being in both an actual and an alternate state, one can raise the additional question of whether or not a quality like "sick" is a state of X in the actual or alternate state. If X is sick now (actual), then she may be healthy later (alternate); if I am now healthy, I may be sick later and so on.

#7: Cause/motive/reason. Does the writer mention any reason for either state being what it is? In Nashe's lines is any cause given for the speaker's present sickness? For the death of

"queens"? The cause of Tristram's present misfortunes, in the passage from Sterne, is fairly obvious. But is it a plausible one? If things hadn't happened the way they did, would their absence be a cause for the alternate state so desirable to Tristram? The cause of X, we suppose, is never given with X but always supplied by the writer's representation of X. It is, that is, an attributive property of X rather than an innate, pregiven, one.

ATTRIBUTABLE CHARACTERS

With much of the above we attempt to model ways modality goes to create the two-states subject (fig. 1) and the specific sorts of information one expects to find as the intelligible ground of each state (fig. 2). Now we need to turn to a model (fig. 3) which displays typical kinds of "character" an author (or reader) gives, or can give, to each state. For explanatory convenience we divide "character" into two broad areas, the personal and the collective. With the first we assume that the origin of the attributed character is either the author himself or his persona. One state is "bad," "good," or "probable" (labels one can give to a character) because of some personal reason or point of view. Texts that foreground the "I" (e.g., Litany in Time of Plague, A Modest Proposal or Huckleberry Finn) tend to exhibit this type of character. The collective character, by contrast, is assumed to have its origin in the collective opinion of the group, nation or race. If, say, the actual state is said to be evil, then the warrant for saying it would be such opinion. Actual states like poverty, war or famine would generally be considered evil, e.g., more by a collective consensus than by the personal opinion of the author.[6] In representing the actual state as evil, the author also create a condition in which the reader may infer that the alternate state is necessary as an alleviation of the evil-actual-state. In all of this the author sets to work not only polarities like "good/evil," "bad/better," or incomplete/complete," but also

logical probabilities like "probable/improbable," "plausible/implausible" or "likely/unlikely." Aristotle's discussion of the topic of the possible (dunatou) and the impossible (adunatou) is an example how one such logical probability becomes the label of an alternate state (Rhetoric 1392a).

For some typical attributable characters we then have the following correlations (fig. 3):

ATTRIBUTABLE CHARACTERS	STATES: Actual	STATES: Alternate
1. Evil (or Good)		
a. Personal		
b. Collective		
2. Deficient (or Perfect)		
a. Personal		
b. Collective		
3. Plausible (or Implausible)		
a. Personal		
b. Collective		
4. Dangerous (or Safe)		
a. Personal		
b. Collective		
5. Tragic (or Comic)		
a. Personal		
b. Collective		

Fig. 3.

(Where again ellipses mean that many other characters, like #1 through #7, could be attributed to either state.)

Fig. 3 then will model texts with the following sorts of relationships between the actual and the alternate states; relationships made intelligible by the different characters given each state by either the author (explicit) or the reader (inferred). Some of these possibilities can be displayed by a bidirectional figure (where the labels for characters are given in parentheses):

1. Actual (evil)<--->Alternate (good).
2. Alternate (evil)<--->actual (good).
3. Actual<--->Alternate (plausible).

Fig. 4.

And example of a text displaying #1 is A Modest Proposal. Alleviation of the evils of the actual state (poverty, hunger, over-population, etc.) will be made through its replacement by the alternate state proposed by the speaker, an Irish Patriot. An example of #2 is the Surgeon General's warning about pregnant women and smoking. In this last example, obviously, a correlation is drawn between the alternate state as the consequences of the actual state of smoking.

GOING ON, CONDITIONS AND STRATEGIES

The purpose of the foregoing was to suggest ways to model modality in terms of one of its possible effects in a text--the creation of the "two-states" subject. Now I want to describe how this effect can be made the basis for developing writing

strategies. To do this I first assume that a major problem for the writer is that of "going on," going on, in the prewriting stage from one piece of information about the subject to another and then, in the writing state, from this clause to the next one, from this sentence to the next-and so on. Such going on, however, presupposes certain conditions (or constraints) imposed by the text-audience, genre or available information. (Obviously, the more one knows about the subject, the more one increases the possibility of going on.) In developing and representing a strategy, then, one must also try to be aware of what conditions control its use. With this in mind, please consider (a), (b) and (c).

(a) Expanding information about the subject. This is essentially a prewriting, or revising, activity; one the writer engages in with the collaboration of peers. The question is not only if information about the subject is sufficient enough for this or that audience, but also if the procedure for eliciting new information is effective. In this the main task is to see if information from one subject-state can be used to amplify that form the other. Suppose, e.g., the subject is "acid rain." Information from its actual state might include answers to the following categorial (wh-) questions:

1. What acid rain? What, say, is its chemical composition?
2. Who causes it? Whom does it affect?
3. Where does it occur?
4. When was it first noticed? What time of year does it become

a problem?

And so on through the other questions. Notice here that information about the subject is assumed to have either a past or present status (cf. fig. 2). What was the case for acid rain at some time in the past may also be its case now--in terms of all the categories given. To expand information about acid rain into the alternate state is essentially to introduce either possibility or necessity into the same type of questions. Inasmuch as these concepts always carry the suggestion of the irreal (something-not-now-here), one is essentially asking questions about the subject in a non-existing state.

1. What as yet undetected chemical properties might acid rain contain? What, given its known composition and behavior, could it contain?

2. Who may become a potential cause of acid rain? Who may become its victims? Who must be?

3. When must the problem of acid rain be attacked? When should it be solved?

And so on. Besides the goal of expanding information about the subject, one also hopes with the two series of questions to achieve a balance between information from both states; alternatively, to temper information from one state with that from another. Too much information from the alternate state tends, in particular, to produce what might be called the "soap opera effect." Everything is "what could be" ("could Jane be in love with Marilyn's husband?" "could Bob be thinking of

defending Nora against Sloan's charge of adultery?" etc.) or "what should be" ("Lane should stop taking crack and pay more attention to his business," "should Sue Ann have an abortion to please Billy Bob?" etc.).

(b) Representing rhetorical intention. Here, obviously, we are in the area of what has traditionally been called "thesis," "stance," or "perspective." Its existence presupposes a subject and a particular focus on it. By rhetorical intention I mean somewhat the same thing. But instead of putting the emphasis on some specific aspect of the subject I put it also on that the author represents as (i) what <u>can</u> be the case and (ii) what <u>should</u> be the case. Each of these, in addition, is usually given some warrant in a procedure or condition. If I say to you, e.g., that "we can do it," then you might ask "how?" Or if you say to me, "we should do it," then I might similarly as you "why?" Such questions, in effect, ask for reasons existing in the actual state that underlie the existence (and possibility) of the alternate state.

An author's representation of such intention then will include, minimally, a passage containing some modal form like "should" or "can" plus some warrant for using it. Such a passage can occur in any text-position (in the following, e.g., #1 and #3 occur at the beginning of the text and #2 towards the end). And any such representation will, to be intelligible, create a picture of the subject's alternate state. E.g.:

1. "In my view, a functional description of effective ideation

in written text should balance expectations for completeness and utility" (Couture 69).

2. "The research method proposed in this chapter may have useful future applications. Scholars could employ it to describe writers' executions of expository frames expressing causation, comparison or contrast, description..." (Hult 167).

3. "Instructors who teach both technical writing and linguistics may find that the two disciplines complement each other. But they may also find that there is a problem with showing students how linguistic concepts apply to the composing process" (Washington 179). (My italics.)

Obviously, the differences in all three passages are substantial. The actual and the alternate, viewed simply as information, differ within each and from the other passages as a whole. But seen from the view of rhetorical intention they all show a choice between alternative modal forms expressing either possibility or necessity. Each writer, by excluding some possible modal forms (and so some possible alternate states), leaves one discrete form (and so one discrete alternate state). We then can ask what conditions controlled each writer's choice of a specific modal form and made it possible for him or her to exclude other possible ones? What conditions, i.e., caused the use of "may" in #1 and #3 and "should" in #2? I know of no definitive answer to this. One condition may simply be stylistic or aesthetic. "May," which seems right to one writer may not to other. Or perhaps it is mere authorial timidity. Instead of

putting one's foot down with a "should" or a "must" one writes a "may" or a "can." But I also suspect that a major condition is a writer's relative experience with the subject. Inexperience of a subject may produce dogmatism and certainty and be expressed by hard forms like "must" or "have to." Long experience with the subject, by contrast, may have the opposite effect of creating authorial uncertainty and softer forms like "may" or "could be."[7]

But whatever the condition, I find it useful to ask peer editors to represent the whole as a decision-diagram (fig. 5):

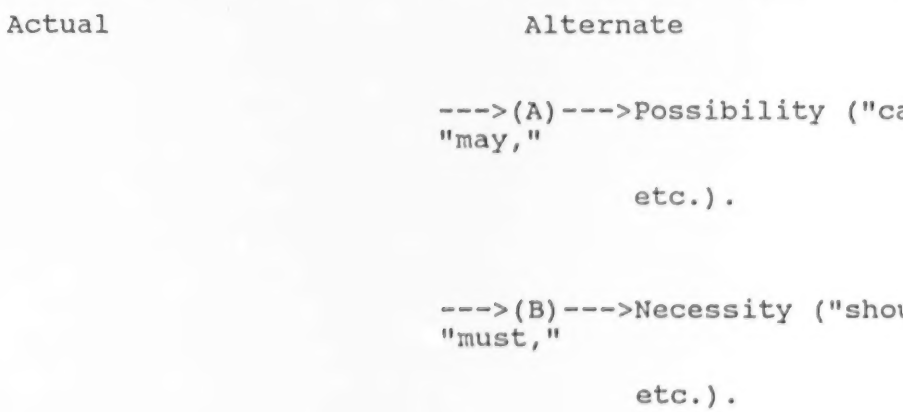

Fig. 5.

This can be read as an if/then/else statement, i.e., if X is the condition, then do A; if Y is the condition then do B, etc. The condition is also represented as an actual one, like an author's concern for style, and elucidatable by peer review.

(c) Representing stylistic variation. Even in the best of pedagogical circumstances style seems virtually unteachable. Some of this is perhaps due to the fact that the field as a whole lacks what might be called "first principles." No agreement

exists, e.g., on a place to start describing style nor what the goal of such description is or might be. A recent bibliography of writings on style, as one example of the confusion, lists some 1484 discrete items on what purports to be style published between 1967-83 and a fuzzy assortment of ways to classify stylistics (e.g., generic, linguistic, historical, cultural, etc) (Bennett). In addition, style tends to resist a procedural representation, a "do this then that; and then repeat this," etc. Nor, it seems, is labeling style much pedagogical use--applying terms like "plain," "lucid," or "complex."

What one needs, I believe, is a procedure that puts the emphasis on "variation" or substitution; the substitution of one term for another, one text-segment for another etc. Judgment on whether or not the resulting style is better (aesthetically more pleasing, more effective in conveying information and the like) than the preceding one would be left to the judgment of peer-editors. In terms of the present subject the purpose of such a procedure is to substitute a "modal" for a "nonmodal style" or vice versa. This, in turn, would have an effect on how the reader receives information about he subject; how, that is, it is represented to him as being either "about" the actual or the alternate state. What would be the form and effect of such a procedure?

We begin, as mentioned above, with only two possible styles, the modal and the nonmodal. What distinguishes these, in a rough way, is (i) either the relative presence, or absence, of modal

forms like "can," or "would" and (ii) the representation of the subject as being either "in" the actual or alternate state. Then, supposing we want to substitute one style for the other, we perform one of three operations on the text:

1. Deletion. Delete either modal or nonmodal forms.
2. Addition. Add modal or nonmodal forms.
3. Leave. Leave either a modal, or nonmodal, form in one place but delete it in another place.

In most cases we would expect deletion, addition and leave to include different types of modal, and nonmodal, forms. That is, we might want to delete "could" and add "can" or delete a past form and add a present one. Here correlation would be to the categories, given above (fig. 1), of pastness and the possible and the necessary.

PEER REVIEW AND GOING ON

It is perhaps clear by now that I recommend using modality chiefly in the context of peer review and only then as an optional procedure. (For graduate classes in rhetorical theory, discourse analysis and the like it might simply be presented as theory and nothing else.) My main justification for such context is what I earlier called "going on." Peer editors need ways of going on from, say, a discussion of usage in this or that text to matters of organization and information--to, in short, "what seems right" or "more right" to them. In this going on for an editor essentially means raising questions about how the text-author has represented, or failed to represent, the two-states

subject. Has it been used, e.g., to expand information about the subject? Represent rhetorical intention or create a certain style? Inasmuch as modality, as a condition of the two-states representation of the subject, is in the linguistic bag of tricks of every writer, the above questions apply, I would claim, to those writing in most academic genres, creative, expository or technical.

NOTES

[1]A model proposed for modality by Halliday (335) is essentially this:

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                                    --->Yes answer

Yes-no Q------------>               --->Modal answer
                                    (e.g.,

                                         "could be,"
                                         "may be,"

                                         "must be,"
                                         etc.)

                                    --->No answer
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I.e., modals essentially exist primarily as alternatives to direct "yes" or "no" answers to yes-no questions; but such existence is based (or generated) by the prior existence of either "yes" or "no." Modal information has no real status without either one or the other. One can say, in the context of the terminology used in this essay, that any of the three possible answers, yes/modal/no, draws its informational content from the alternate state of the subject. Content of the question itself comes, by contrast, from the actual state of the subject--or what the questioner perceives it to be.

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[2]Nor is any attempt made to model boundary markers between the two states; or, more familiarly, to answer the question "what signals in the text, besides modal and nonmodal forms themselves, inform the reader that she is passing from one state to the

other?" Negatives like "no," "not," or "never" and disjunctives like "but," "however," or "nevertheless" would, we expect, constitute major boundary markers. The common "if/then," one supposes, is also a common boundary marker.

[3]Aristotle's definition of lying, "a statement of that which is that it is not, or of that which is not that it is" (Metaphysics 1011b 25), seems to presuppose the unreal state as part of its criteria. Cf. the Houyhnhnms' definition of truth as "saying that which is not" (Gulliver's Travels, Bk. 4).

[4]In general we also assume, without trying to prove it in anyway, that the actual and alternate states stand to each other in a "one to many relationship. I.e., the actual state is one state of the subject but in the alternate state it can be many. If there is a limit on just how many states the subject can have in the alternate state it would be set by the number of modal forms in a particular language. No agreement exists, to my knowledge, on how many discrete forms occur in English but it would perhaps, with the inclusion of ones like "dare," "need" or "seem," be over 30. If, however, one only includes modal auxiliaries, "must," "should" or "ought," the number is far less--on an order of 10 or so (cf. Coates 4-6).

5In one way, it seems, one can say that both the actual and alternate states are representable by two different "sets" of predicates made about the same object and its properties. Thus "...is blue," "...was hot" or "...has been mad" are predicates of (and for) any actual object and "...may be blue," "...must have

been hot" or "...would have been mad" predicates of the object in its alternate state. By substituting one set of predicates for another the writer transfers, as it were, the object from one state to another. If "object" is defined as whatever can made up the subject, then analysis of the nature of any given actual and alternate subject might begins at the level of its objects; whatever must, presumably, exist prior to the existence of the subject. In a subject like "acid rain," e.g., such alleged objects might include those who produce it, are affected by it, equipment to prevent it, etc. (Cf. Parsons' "nuclear" and "extranuclear" predicates 17-29.)

[6]Part of the knowledge of every reader, one supposes, is whether or not the attributed character "fits" his or her prior knowledge about the character of either the actual or the alternate state. That is, no reader, presumably, comes to a text without some conception of what is good, bad, impossible and the like. But one would also assume that there is a kind of asymmetry in the character given by the reader to either the actual or alternate state. The asymmetry lies, in general, in a completeness:incompleteness ratio. If the reader knows the actual state to be evil, say, than he or she can only know the alternate state as incompletely good (or some other character ameliorative of the character of the actual state.) In this sense, the alternate state is always incomplete from the reader's pretext knowledge of the actual state--e.g., in the reading of A Modest Proposal.

[7]Choosing between the representation of either the possible, or necessary, alternate state might also be done on the basis of either a "declarative" or "procedural" rhetorical intention. That is, the writer either wants to state something about X with either a modal of possibility or necessity ("X may be Y" or "X must be Y") or describe X as a set of procedures with either a possible or necessary nature ("X may have to be executed" or "X must be executed").

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